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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2018

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SUBJECT: KOZULIN EXTENDS HAND TO LUKASHENKO IN WEB CHAT

REF: MINSK 145 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reason 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

1. (SBU) One day after his wife's funeral, political prisoner and former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin offered an olive branch of forgiveness to Aleksandr Lukashenko, "for the good of the country." Kozulin is in the final hours of a three-day furlough that was approved to facilitate his participation in the funeral. Regime sources claim that a decision on Kozulin's future is still being debated. End summary.

#### Kozulin Prepared to Forgive, Forget

2. (U) On the final day of a three-day furlough to take part in his wife's funeral (reftel), political prisoner Aleksandr Kozulin took part in a web chat hosted by "Belorusskiye Novosti" ([www.naviny.by](http://www.naviny.by)). Kozulin, touched by the powerful emotions of the past few days, struck a moral and an almost theological tone in offering his hand to Aleksandr Lukashenko. Kozulin said, "We all walk beneath the Lord God. And today, especially today, after the past two days, when I absorbed all the love, all the pain, all the human sorrow into my very self, I can say that I forgive Lukashenko everything." Later in the discussion, Kozulin explained that he extended his hand to Lukashenko with his whole heart, with pure intentions and for the common good of Belarus.

#### Kozulin's Fate Remains to be Determined

3. (C) Just an hour before this web chat, Presidential Administration Foreign Policy Advisor Valentin Rybakov told Ambassador that the GOB was still considering Kozulin's fate and had yet to take a definitive position.

#### Comment

4. (SBU) Persons close to the regime, including members of Lukashenko's amen-chamber National Assembly, have said recently that the Department's call for Kozulin's release must be taken seriously. Kozulin's conciliatory words today give the regime just one more reason to do so.

STEWART